

CLAIMS

Claim 1. A personal assistance apparatus having a mobile seating surface, said seating surface having a power driven, selectively variable height capacity from a substantially contiguous floor level and a mobility incapacitating mechanism to immobilize said apparatus when said seating surface is positioned substantially at said floor level.

Claim 2. A personal assistance apparatus as described by claim 1 wherein said seating surface is secured to a substantially vertical guide mast and translated along said mast by a linear actuator.

Claim 3, A personal assistance apparatus as described by claim 2 wherein said mast is secured at an angular departure from vertical to translate the center of a mass on said seat toward vertical alignment with a center of gravity of said apparatus as said seat rises along said mast from said floor level.

Claim 4. A personal assistance apparatus as described by claim 2 wherein said mast is secured to a wheeled base frame.

Claim 5. A personal assistance apparatus as described by claim 4 wherein at least one wheel supporting said base frame is immobilized by a braking mechanism.

Claim 6. A personal assistance apparatus as described by claim 5 wherein said braking mechanism is actuated to immobilize said wheel by translation of said seat to substantial adjacency with said floor level.

Claim 7. A personal assistance apparatus as described by claim 6 wherein said wheel immobilization is maintained by said braking mechanism after translation of said seat from said floor level.

Claim 8. A personal assistance apparatus as described by claim 7 wherein said wheel is mobilized by manual release of said braking mechanism after translation of said seat from said floor level.

Claim 9. A personal assistance apparatus as described by claim 2 wherein said linear actuator comprises a threaded drive shaft that is rotatively driven by an electric motor.

Claim 10. A personal assistance apparatus as described by claim 2 wherein said seating surface is laterally delineated between arm barriers.

Claim 11. A method of assisting an ambulatory infirm person to their feet from a floor surface comprising the steps of positioning a vertically controlled seat surface on said floor surface adjacent to the person, manipulating the posterior of said person onto said seat surface, and raising the level of said seat surface to an elevation compatible with direct transfer of said person's weight from said seat surface onto said persons' feet.

Claim 12. A mobile lifting device having:

- a substantially vertical support mast secured to a base frame, said base frame being supported from a floor surface by a plurality of wheels;

- a load platform suspended from said support mast;

- a drive mechanism to translate said load platform along said mast substantially to and from a floor surface engagement position; and,

- a braking mechanism to substantially immobilize said base frame when said load platform is substantially contiguous with said floor surface.

Claim 13. A mobile lifting device as described by claim 12 wherein said mast is secured to said base frame at an angular departure from vertical to translate the center of a mass on said load platform toward vertical alignment with a center

of gravity of said device as said platform rises along said mast from said floor surface.

Claim 14. A mobile lifting device as described by claim 12 wherein said drive mechanism comprises a linear actuator.

Claim 15. A mobile lifting device as described by claim 14 wherein said linear actuator comprises a threaded drive shaft that is rotatively driven by an electric motor.

Claim 16. A mobile lifting device as described by claim 12 wherein said braking mechanism immobilizes at least one of said base frame support wheels.

Claim 17. A mobile lifting device as described by claim 12 wherein said braking mechanism comprises a latching element to continue immobilization of said base frame after said platform rises from said floor surface.

Claim 18. A mobile lifting device as described by claim 17 wherein said braking mechanism further comprises a manual latch release to manually disengage said latching element after said platform is raised from said floor surface.